

control went soggy, so that was that. Wood had at first sight treasured the remote idea of getting fuel sent to the reef, and having a shot at taking off again. After looking at the surface close to, we surmised that this would probably have been fatal.

We scrambled out to look at the damage; the tail wheel had fallen through a thin crust of coral, fracturing the yoke casting, and the machine was about ten yards from the seaward west side of the reef. Here the reef fell away very steeply, and heavy breakers were pounding.

Our immediate task was to try to establish W/T communication with Koepang, so we ran out a trailing aerial, using the two oars of our collapsible boat to insulate it from the reef. Gilroy could hear both Koepang and Sourabaya W/T stations, but was unable to make contact with either of them, despite the fact that the radiation in the aerial was just over $2\frac{1}{2}$ amps. In an endeavour to improve the transmission and recharge the aircraft battery, which was running down, we started up the port engine, which was equipped with a generator.

Out of Range

At 1115 hours we decided that we must be out of range of the W/T stations in the vicinity, and closed down, our position still unknown. The tide had by now begun to rise. It was obvious that our best policy was to try to get on board the fishing boat in the lagoon. Our subsequent adventures were not so much of aeronautical as of geographical importance.

When eventually transhipped to the S.S. *Nimoda* we made a careful layout of our course with the charts available. We found that the reef was 600 miles from Darwin and that our ground speed to it had been 187 m.p.h. We also found that it was 267 miles from Koepang and 300 miles from the nearest wireless station, Broome, on the Australian coast. Furthermore, the bearing of the reef relative to Darwin was 262° , and, neglecting drift, the compass error was deduced to have been approximately 15° . The bearings received from Darwin as against our probable bearings at the time stated are as follows:—

Time.		Actual Bearing.	W/T Bearing.
0512 hrs. ..	..	271°	288°
0532 hrs. ..	..	270°	288.5°
0552 hrs. ..	..	268°	289°
0622 hrs. ..	..	265°	288°

Wood may be criticised for attempting to correct so small a variation from the true course as 1° north, but with the compass 15° out we should still have been in trouble, the probability being that we should have passed the Islands

of Roti and Savu—much too far out to sea to sight them.

Subsequently, Wood was in the awkward predicament of having received "first-class" wireless bearings, and having had his doubts as to the veracity of the third bearing negated. He therefore had no justification for altering course to the north where, if he had gone wrong in consequence, the W/T station would have been the first to blame him for doubting the accuracy of their signals. If Darwin W/T had told us that there was the slightest doubt as to our position, we should have altered course, so as to remain in touch until precise information was forthcoming. There was, however, no hesitation on their part, and a "first-class" wireless bearing is usually considered to have a standard of integrity equivalent to that of a Bank of England note. It is a matter of great surprise that neither from the air before landing, nor on the reef, were we able to contact either the Koepang or Broome stations. Our equipment was efficient and in perfect order, and on the previous day we had maintained two-way communication over land up to a distance of 550 miles from Melbourne.

That we survived at all is, of course, an amazing piece of good fortune. With only average luck the machine would have just vanished, and a verdict of structural failure, or of engine trouble, would have been our epitaph. Even after a successful landing on the reef we would not have survived long if there had been no means of getting away from it: we might have lasted four days on our emergency rations, with the high tide level of the water over the reef rising every day. We actually landed on the reef at low water, during a period of neap tides. At high tide on that day the reef was covered to a depth of 3 ft. A week later this would have increased to 14 ft., which meant that the aircraft would then be covered, and the heavy ocean swell would soon break it up. By the time we were able to get information through to the outside world it was therefore too late, and the reef too inaccessible for any salvage work to be done.

With the machine relatively undamaged, due to Wood's magnificent work, this was tragic, and it was one of the hardest things I ever had to do to leave the aircraft stranded, through no fault of its own, standing up like a monument in the clear atmosphere until the sea eventually claimed it.

A committee of enquiry is being held in Australia to investigate the whole matter.

The End: "... one of the hardest things I ever had to do was to leave the aircraft stranded, through no fault of its own, standing up like a monument in the clear atmosphere until the sea eventually claimed it."

